Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and sixty-sixth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 August 2018, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. Beliz Celasin Rende ..... (Turkey)

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The President: I call to order the one thousand four hundred sixty-sixth plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished ambassadors and delegates, dear colleagues, Madam Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mrs. Kaspersen, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me, on behalf of the Republic of Turkey, to assume the presidency of this august body.

I would like to propose that the order of business of our meeting this morning be as follows: introductory remarks from the President to present the vision and plans of Turkey for the last Presidency of the 2018 session; statements by delegations who wish to take the floor; and an informal session to discuss the advance copy of the draft annual report.

I will now make my introductory remarks.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the single, multilateral disarmament negotiating platform, with its unique structure among the international fora and its special mandate of negotiating legally binding disarmament instruments, has been at the centre of the endeavours to render our world a safer place since its foundation. Significant achievements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, are milestones in our common efforts in the Conference on Disarmament to establish and sustain peace, security and prosperity in the world.

Turkey is of the opinion that the efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation contribute substantially to global peace and stability. The deteriorating nature of the international security environment can only be reversed by investing in mutual understanding and dialogue, not by depending more on any kind of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. Our ultimate goal is a world without nuclear weapons. The successful and universal implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the right starting point for this.

A pending commitment of the 2010 action plan of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was the convening of an international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. This commitment cannot be overlooked. On another issue, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is crucial for global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

In addition to nuclear disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament covers many other important topics. Its agenda guides us throughout the year on the issues to be discussed towards taking concrete steps for the good of all humanity. As I stated at the beginning of my speech, the Conference on Disarmament has the potential to create a safer and more secure world. All we need is frank dialogue and the courage to tap this potential by letting the Conference start negotiating legally binding disarmament and non-proliferation instruments while keeping an eye on emerging realities.

An enormous effort has been put in by all member States to advancing the work of the Conference on Disarmament since the beginning of the 2018 session. I would like to thank all delegations and express my appreciation for their dedication to and enthusiasm for ensuring the Conference's relevance. The establishment of five subsidiary bodies to help us to reach an understanding on the areas of commonalities in the Conference on Disarmament by taking into consideration all relevant views and proposals, past, present and future, to deepen technical discussions and broaden areas of agreement, including through the participation, in accordance with the rules of procedure, of relevant experts, and to consider effective measures, including legal instruments for negotiations, was a very important step forward in 2108. It raised high hopes of progress, not only for the Conference on Disarmament, but also for the many people who had a shared concern over the state of various disarmament platforms. The discussions in the subsidiary bodies have exposed the need for better understanding of different positions; it has been extremely important and encouraging to see that there are far more areas on which we have converged than those on which we disagree. Therefore, I would also like to thank the coordinators of all the subsidiary bodies for the hard work they have put in so far.

Distinguished colleagues, as we announced on 7 August, the first draft of the annual report of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament, which I believe you have had time to look over, was circulated on Monday by the secretariat. The report is currently available in English only, but the secretariat has taken the necessary steps to have it circulated in all official languages as soon as possible. In our statement to the plenary, we also extended an open invitation to all member States to express their views and expectations about the annual report, which was in preparation at that time on the basis of the previous years' annual reports. Following that, with the aim of producing a factual, impartial and objective annual report in a transparent manner, we conducted bilateral meetings with all interested member States and with delegations who preferred to share their initial remarks on the draft report. The draft annual report before you was prepared in accordance with common past practices and based on your remarks as received at those consultation meetings. We listened to you carefully and did our best to accommodate the expectations of all delegations. Now the report before you is your report, since it has been already circulated. My delegation and I are at your disposal to hear your further comments on it.

Having said that, I would like to clarify a couple of issues about the draft report. Today, at the end of this plenary session, we would like to receive your initial comments on the draft report of the Conference on Disarmament in an informal setting. Furthermore, we would be grateful if the delegations could send their written comments by email to the secretariat (cd@un.org) before noon on Monday 27 August. Then a compilation of written comments will be circulated with the assistance of the secretariat and we will continue to exchange views on the report next week.

During our consultation meetings, all delegations stressed the importance of adopting a consensual report. As the sixth and last President of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018, we are ready to hold additional plenaries and informal meetings in order to reach a consensus on the report. We have therefore tentatively included one additional plenary for next Thursday, 30 August, in our schedule. As you might already have noticed, the draft annual report has placeholders for the reports of the subsidiary bodies. According to the timetable contained in document CD/2126, the meetings of the subsidiary bodies will conclude tomorrow. We have extended invitations to all coordinators of the subsidiary bodies to meet once their sessions are over. At that meeting, we will try to explore where we stand on the subsidiary bodies reports. Our intention is to bring all reports to the Conference for adoption on Thursday of next week, or the following week at the latest, provided that the report on the progress achieved and agreed on in each subsidiary body is submitted by its coordinator to the Conference on Disarmament through the President, in accordance with the decision contained in document CD/2190. Therefore, until the next plenary meeting, I request all the member States to concentrate on other parts of the annual report for the sake of better and more efficient time management.

Having said that, I would like to open today's discussion and I will now turn to the list of speakers for today.

Representative of Zimbabwe, you have the floor.

Mr. Mushayavanhu (Zimbabwe): Thank you, Madam President. Since this is the first time that Zimbabwe is taking the floor under your Presidency, my delegation would like to assure you of our cooperation and commend you for the work that you have been doing since your assumption of the Presidency.

Your submission of the first draft of the annual report on the first operative day of your Presidency is welcome, a real signal of the momentum that you seek to build.

Madam President, the decision which established the five subsidiary bodies to explore the Conference on Disarmament agenda items has guided the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2018, without prejudice to the objective of complete nuclear disarmament, in the successful negotiation of a substantive programme of work. The commendable efforts of all the Presidents of this 2018 session can never be adequately captured in the annual report, now under negotiation in the Conference. It has been hard work, for which my delegation is grateful.

Madam President, my delegation was not able to participate in the last plenary session of this Conference, which reflected on the United Nations Secretary-General's disarmament agenda on "Securing our common future". As a delegation, we welcome on the Secretary-General's input, which we hope will help to inject some fresh momentum into the disarmament discourse. Of course, the Secretary-General's report will be more useful if it can serve to reinvigorate the stalled work of the Conference on Disarmament and help us to refocus this institution away from the current paralysis and towards a return to negotiations. It is unfortunate but true that the perception of the world outside these walls is that this forum has practically become moribund, to the extent that we cannot even agree on a substantive programme of work. As a result of this situation, substantive negotiations are now taking place outside the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is therefore left to wonder whether the mantra that the Conference on Disarmament is the world's single, multilateral disarmament negotiating body still holds water. Twenty-two years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty negotiations is just too long a period to not be making any progress. We may need to introspect and admit our failure to the United Nations and the wider world, on whose behalf the Conference on Disarmament is mandated to negotiate disarmament instruments.

Zimbabwe condemns the use of weapons of mass destruction, including the use of chemical and biological weapons. Equally, we censure the possession, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this respect, we see a glaring display of contradiction and double standards in the positions of some members who, in one breath, condemn the use of one set of weapons of mass destruction and extol the supposed virtues of nuclear weapons in their national security doctrines.

Madam President, as we strive to build the foundations for durable international peace and security, Zimbabwe will be a reliable and strong partner in promoting the multilateral norm against the possession, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. We do not think that it makes sense to promote a norm against chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction without also establishing a norm against nuclear weapons.

Madam President, Zimbabwe's unequivocal position is in favour of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is for this reason that Zimbabwe last year supported the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

Finally, Madam President, as the current coordinator of the Group of 21, Zimbabwe's door is open for engagement with all delegations as we begin negotiations on the annual report of the Conference.

I thank you.

The President: I thank the representative of Zimbabwe for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor?

That seems not to be the case. If there is no further request from the floor, I want to close this session and start the informal discussion after a short break.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.